

# Five Basic Postulates Of Protestantism



This article is from chapter 30 of "Out of the Labyrinth: The Conversion of a Roman Catholic Priest" by former Roman Catholic priest Leo Herbert Lehmann, first published in 1947 and made available online by The Lutheran Library Publishing Ministry [LutheranLibrary.org](http://LutheranLibrary.org).

## Webmaster's Introduction

From my perspective as a former Roman Catholic, it seems to me that one of the greatest differences between Catholics and Protestants is how they define the word "church." Catholics cannot separate the church from Jesus because they believe one can only have a relationship with Jesus via the ecclesiastical framework of priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals and the pope. To Catholics, this ecclesiastical organization *is* the Church. On the other hand, Bible-following Protestants call *themselves* the Church! It doesn't matter if he or she is a newly saved babe in Christ. They through faith in Christ become a part of the Church of Christ just like a baby becomes part of a family by being born. True Christians base this belief on what the Bible says.

Colossians 1:18 And he (Christ) is *the head of the body*, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead;

Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of *the body*.

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now *ye are the body of Christ*, and members in particular.

When William Tyndale translated the New Testament in 1526, rather than translate the Greek word *ekklesia* as "church," he used the word "congregation" instead. For this Tyndale received much criticism from Roman Catholic bishops. But Strong's concordance agrees with Tyndale's translation because it defines *ekklesia* as "an assembly, a (religious) congregation."

---

SIMPLICITY is characteristic of the teachings of Evangelical Christianity – and rightly so. For it has been well said that multiplication of doctrines is perilous to the spiritual life. It tends to distract our attention and, by fixing it upon fragments, dulls the sense of the immeasurable whole.

This multiplication and fragmentation of doctrines is characteristic of Roman

Catholic teaching, and clearly points up the contrast between it and the true Gospel teaching.

Following are five points, which may well be called basic postulates of Protestantism. They not only clarify all that is necessary and basic to the Christian teaching about salvation, but show up the opposing errors of Roman Catholic teaching in each particular:

### **1. The Primacy of Christ.**

All Protestants base their hope of salvation on the Gospel teaching that Jesus Christ holds the primacy in all things – to the exclusion of all others (Col. 1:18). This primacy is manifold: 'primacy in the incarnation, since He alone took man's nature without sin; primacy in the all-sufficiency of His sacrifice "offered once for all," so that there is now "no more offering for sin;" primacy in love and sympathy toward us, needing no persuasion, no intervention of priest or angel or other intercessor; primacy also in the honor and glory justly due to Him and from which nothing can be deducted or accorded to any creature.

Opposed to this is Roman Catholic teaching: that this primacy is shared by men, by the Pope as claiming to possess all power in heaven and on earth; that Christ's sacrifice is not perfect and complete and once offered forever, but must be repeated and even improved upon by priests offering the 'sacrifice' of the mass daily for the sins of men; that love and honor due to Christ must flow exclusively through these priests and other created beings.

### **2. Man's Personal, Direct Access to God.**

Protestants believe that when a soul is convinced of sin and when guilt presses upon the conscience, reconciliation is had by personal acceptance of Christ's invitation: "Come unto ME... and I will give you rest;" that forgiveness cannot be negotiated by the ordinances of a Church or by the absolution of a priest. Roman Catholic teaching says: "There is no salvation without the priest." Protestants say: "There is full salvation in Christ."

### **3. A Conscious Sense of Pardoned Sin.**

Protestants are logical in expecting from Christ, their Saviour, not a partial, but a full pardon for sin, a pardon that not merely wipes a soul clean just for a time, but that makes the sinner a new creature. They fully believe that: "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1), that: "Sin shall not have dominion over you" and that Christ's work and message bring joy and freedom.

Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, counts it a sin of presumption to be assured of salvation, and teaches that men must always seek, but will never find, a profound and blessed sense of full forgiveness and assurance of salvation. Its saints are distinguished by their misery, not by their happiness. It is as if Christ had died in vain.

#### **4. Belief in the Right of Private Judgment.**

Protestants assert the right of each one to find and judge for himself about the truth of God and salvation. They also believe in the sacredness of the personal responsibility that goes with this right. The Bible to them is an open book, wherein each seeker after truth can be fully and infallibly enlightened. They acknowledge that in Christian teaching you cannot transfer to another the responsibility for your faith, and, if you do so, you thereby weaken your moral and spiritual character.

In Roman Catholic teaching, the priest takes the responsibility for the mistakes and sins of his people, and the Roman Catholic Church becomes in reality a kind of 'spiritual insurance society,' to which its members dutifully pay their dues, and onto which they shove off all responsibility for their sins and their souls' salvation. Ultimately, all responsibility for the entire membership rests with one man – the Pope – since he alone is declared to be the infallible guide for all.

#### **5. The Bible as the Word of God.**

In the Bible all Protestants find the perfect rule of faith and practice. It is to them the Word of God made manifest in their hearts, just as Christ is God made manifest in the flesh of man.

Although the Roman Catholic Church now professes to allow its people to read the Bible, prohibition against any private interpretation of it, that is in any way contrary to the Church's teachings and practices, still remains.

On these five basic postulates, Protestants of all denominations can establish a unity that will more than match the false and merely external unity of Roman Catholicism. But it is not sufficient for Protestants merely to profess these fundamental postulates in words. They must prove them by demonstrating their spirit and power.